

Friday Morning, December 25, 1888.

## Christmas—Its Origin and Merry Customs.

St. Nicholas, Santa Claus, and Krish-Kinkle, whose traditional budget of all good things, his journey with it through the air, and descent down all chimneys, are radiant visions of childhood, which follow us into maturity and age, have come again, and the replenished stocking, the decorated Christmas tree, and the gifts under manifold forms of surprise, are making millions of young hearts—and old as well—hilarious and happy, as has been the case on the annual return of the event for more than a thousand times before. Christmas, so called from the two Latin words, *Christi* and *Missa*, signifying the mass, or offering of Christ, is the great festival of the ecclesiastic year, and so important and joyous a solemnity is it deemed, that a special exception is made in its behalf, whereby in the event of the anniversary falling on Friday, that day of the week, under all other circumstances a fast, is transformed into a festival. That the birth of Jesus Christ, the deliverer of the human race, the mysterious link connecting the transcendent and incomprehensible attributes of Deity with human sympathies and affections, should be considered the most glorious event that ever happened, and the most worthy of commemoration, commends itself to the heart and reason of all who aspire to walk in His foot-steps and share in the ineffable benefits of His sacrifice. In Catholic countries, a mass is always celebrated at mid-night on Christmas Eve, the hour in which our Saviour is believed to have been born, another at day-break on Christmas Day, and a third, at a subsequent hour in the morning. A beautiful idea entertained in this connection, is that which represents a thorough prostration of the Powers of Darkness at this season, relieving mankind for the time from their malevolent influences. The cock is supposed to crow all night long, and by his vigilance to scare away all malignant spirits.

There is another belief which was long prevalent, even in the memories of the older people of this generation, and in this country as well as elsewhere, that the cattle in their stalls fall down on their knees in adoration of the infant Saviour, as the tradition reports them to have done in the stable at Bethlehem. Bees were also said to sing in their hives, and bread baked on Christmas Eve never to mould. All nature was thus supposed to join in the great solemnity. The custom of Christmas gifts has its origin in the Roman Pagania, which was instituted by Servius Tullius, B. C. 555. On these festivals, celebrated at the beginning of the year, an altar was erected in every village, and to the box placed upon it, every man, woman and child was expected to contribute a coin. Aubrey speaks of a pot, in which Roman coins were found, and supposed to be one of these Paganian vessels. The Christmas box naturally arose from this Pagan New Year's box. There is an impressive propriety and tender beauty, however, in thus commemorating the event which gave a Divine Redeemer to a lost world, the greatest gift that is conceivable to mankind. It is, moreover, an equally appropriate custom, which makes the season one not only of composing and forgetting old quarrels, and renewing and confirming friendships, but for a universal manifestation of generosity and charity from the rich to the poor—in olden times, this beneficence being extended even to the lower animals, a practice to which Burns alludes in "The Auld Farmer's Address to his Mare." St. Nicholas is one of the most popular saints of Catholic Europe, being invoked as the patron of sailors, travelers, captives, and the guardian of unmarried girls and children. The Dutch call him Santa Claus. The earliest legend of his appearance at Christmas, is derived from the Italians. Giraldi, a shoemaker of Verrara, was very poor and could not give his three pretty daughters even the smallest dowry, and thus, though each had an admirer, they were left unmarried. The father prayed to his patron saint, St. Nicholas, that he would interpose a miracle. A neighbor, a rich merchant, one day overhearing his simple petition, ridiculed the idea that St. Nicholas would thus interpose for his daughters, and told him that his saint was Buonajuto, the Jew, who lent money at two per cent. a month. "He is not so deaf as St. Nicholas," the merchant added, "and if you know how to manage, you can make four per cent." The poor shoemaker, however, maintained his integrity, and daily prayed. Christmas morn-

ing came, and the Jew, finding a balance of three hundred ducats on the yearly account due the merchant, thought to make him a surprise, in sending him a fattened and roasted duck, with the three hundred gold pieces sewed up in the body. The merchant's wife, however, sharing in the prevailing prejudices against the Jews, refused to receive a present from one of the race. The merchant, therefore, sold the duck for a dollar to the poor, praying shoemaker, who took it home for his Christmas dinner, and when, on opening the fowl with the carver, the gold fell out, his exclamation was, "Praise to St. Nicholas!" and divided the sum between his two eldest daughters. The merchant discovering the result of the experiment in sewing up gold in the carcass of a duck, brought an action against Giraldi; but the magistrate, a devout man, on hearing the case, and learning how the poor man had been ridiculed for his devotion, not only ordered Giraldi to retain the ducats, but sentenced the Jew and the merchant for their unscrupulous dealings to pay a fine of one hundred and fifty ducats for the dowry of the poor shoemaker's youngest daughter. The meaning of this legend is, that a beneficent Providence watches over and takes care of the poor, who are honest, religious and truthful. The tradition runs, that since that time, St. Nicholas pays a visit every Christmas night to all whom he thinks worthy of his favors. He is known altogether by the name—*Santa Claus*. In Germany and other Northern European countries, the traditional benefactor of the children, with his Christmas budget for the good children's stockings, is known as *Krish Kinkle*, a name—*Christ-kindlein*—Christ-infant—understood to be derived from the circumstance that a representation of the infant Saviour in the manger, formed a part of their Christmas decoration. Bad children, instead of the sugar-plums from *Krish Kinkle*, find in their stockings "the birchen rod" from *Pelsnichol*. The Germans of Pennsylvania brought their Teutonic customs—the stocking hung at the foot of the bed, *Krish Kinkle*, the Christmas tree—at an early period into that State, while Santa Claus came with the Hollanders into New York.

The evens or vigils of the different ecclesiastical festivals throughout the year, according to the strict letter of ceremonial rule, are times of penance; but in several instances custom has appropriated them to very different purposes, making them seasons of mirth and jollity. All-Saints' Eve and Christmas Eve, or the evening before Christmas Day, being special instances of this appropriation. Christmas Eve may be said to be practically the beginning of the Christmas holidays, though, according to ecclesiastical computation, the festival really begins on December 16, the day distinguished in the calendar as *O, Sapientia*, from the name of the anthem sung during Advent, though by some it is maintained that the festival does not begin 'til the evening before Christmas Day. The season is held to terminate on the 1st of February, the evening before the Purification of the Virgin—Candlemas Day—when, according to the ecclesiastical canons, all the decorations must be removed from the churches. In common usage the Christmas holidays commence on Christmas Eve and end on January 6, or Twelfth Day, as it is called.

The Christmas tree, on Christmas Eve, in Germany and the North of Europe, as also very extensively in America, is a splendor and delight in the eyes and imaginations of all the children, and, in fact, forms the grandest feature in the festal season of Christmas among the Northern European nations, being often called the Children's Festival. The Christmas tree seems to be a very ancient custom in Germany—a remnant probably of the splendid and fanciful pageants of the middle ages. The custom was early introduced into this country by the German emigrants, but was hardly known to England till within the present century. The first forming of the Christmas tree in England is believed to have been done by a German in the household of Queen Caroline, wife of George IV, who saw few happy Christmas trees after her marriage in 1795. The custom did not become general there till Prince Albert came over from Germany to be the husband of Queen Victoria, and since then it has become almost universal in that country.

The two observances of Christmas Eve, of hanging up the mistletoe, and the burning of the Yule log, appear to be derived from our Pagan ancestors. It is well known that the mistletoe, in the religion of the Druids, was regarded with the utmost veneration when found growing upon the bark of the oak, the favorite tree of the divinity Tutanus. When the grand festival, or sacred anniversary in his honor at the period of the winter solstice, arrived, the ancient Britons sallied forth, accompanied by their priests, the Druids, to gather the mystic parasite which, in addition to its sacred, had also, in their views, great curative qualities. Two white bulls were bound to the oak, and the Druid chief, clothed in emblematic white, ascended, and with golden knife cut the sacred mistletoe, and the pieces were caught by another Druid below, in the white

fold of his garment. The bulls were then sacrificed, and the mistletoe, distributed in small portions, was hung in their dwellings over the entrances, as a shelter and a propitiation to the sylvan deities during the cold season. These rites were retained throughout the Roman dominion in Britain, and for a long period during the sovereignty of the Jutes, Saxons and Angles. The mistletoe seldom now grows upon the oak, but flourishes upon the apple trees of the orchards in the west and midland counties of England, from which large quantities are annually gathered, and sold in London for Christmas decorations.

The special custom connected with the mistletoe on Christmas Eve, and an indubitable relic of old Druidism, is well known. A branch of the plant is suspended to the wall or ceiling, and any one of the fair sex, who through inadvertence, or, as possibly may be insinuated, on purpose, passes beneath the sacred sprig, incurs the penalty of being then and there kissed by any lord of creation who is prompted to the enjoyment. The custom of decking houses and churches with evergreens is derived from this Druidical observance. Ivy, mistletoe, holly, rosemary, bays and laurel are the favorite trimmings. It was an old belief that sylvan spirits sheltered themselves in evergreens untripped by frosts to the warmer seasons. Garlands were worn about the head, and hence the phrases, "kiss under the rose," and "whisper under the mistletoe." Holly and ivy in England, as in this country, are the favorite evergreens, though the windows of the chapels of the two great English universities are decked with laurel.

The burning of the Yule log, derived from the kindling of huge bonfires by our Scandinavian ancestors at their feast of *Jual*, in honor of their god, Thor, was very early incorporated into the Christmas observances, and though sadly shorn of its ancient pomp and circumstance, is still maintained in some parts of England, as well as in Northern Continental Europe. The venerable log, each wayfarer doffing his hat as it passed, was drawn from the forest, and rolled with its ponderous proportions into its place upon the spacious hearth-stone of the baronial hall, with every demonstration of joy, on the Christmas Eve, the implicit faith being that in its flame would be burnt out all wrongs and heart-burnings, and the liquor made to bubble in the wassail-bowl, the quaffing of which would drown all ancient feuds and animosities, and "drive dull care away." The half-consumed log was preserved with care for lighting the Yule log the next Christmas Eve, and this charred block was deemed essential in each house as an effectual security against fire during the year. It was deemed a bad omen for a squinting or a bare-footed person, and above all, for a flat-footed woman, to enter the hall while the Yule log was burning, and as an accompaniment to the Yule log, a *Yule* or *Christmas* candle, of stupendous proportions, shed its light upon the occasion. In Cornwall, we are informed in *Notes and Queries*, that the whole family circle gather around the jovial hearth-stone on the occasion, indulging in games and wassail drink to the *Yule* log, or *Mock*, as they call it, the children, as a special dispensation, being allowed to keep late hours on the occasion with those of elder growth. "Goosey dancers" go about from the villages, and make hilarity, while others sing the festal songs beneath the windows, from house to house, early Christmas morning. In Cheshire, entertainments are provided for these singing parties in all private houses, and all, both rich and poor, deck their homes for fourteen days with the sacred holly and attendant mistletoe, under the shade of the latter of which many a kiss is stolen, which on other days would be forbidden fruit. The inspiring song of old Herrick, of which we give the first stanza, is well known:

"Come, bring with you a noise,  
My merry, merry boys,  
The Christmas log to the firing;  
While my good dame, she  
Bids ye all be free,  
And drink to your heart's desiring."

There is no more charming custom connected with this festival than that of the Christmas Carols, which in joyous and devout strains celebrate the nativity of the Saviour, and which has given to us much of the sweet and simple poetry that most adorns English literature. The custom is as ancient as Christmas itself.

In these songs the clergy, high and low, parents and children, joined, combining in the merriment, the strains of the organ, tambour, guitar and violin, each participant, if in the night, bearing in the hand a torch. The Yule-log was laid upon the fire, while the people sat around, regaling themselves with beer. In the course of the night small parties went about from house to house, chanting these simple, popular ditties, full of joyful allusion to the Redeemer; and it is still the custom, during the last days preceding Christmas, for the Calabrian minstrels to descend from the mountains to Rome, saluting the shrines of the Virgin Mother with their wild songs, under the poetical notion of cheering her until the birth-time, so near. Raphael, in allusion to this custom, introduces into his picture

of the Nativity, a shepherd playing on a sort of bag-pipe. Throughout England and the continent, and in some parts of this country, the bells at midnight are rung to usher in the day.

In some countries straw is used as an emblem in Christmas festivities, because our Saviour, as a new-born child, was laid upon straw in the manger. This manger-worship, as it was called in the middle ages, is still retained in some retired regions of Catholic countries, and is made the motive to the development of much sacred poetry and art.

Among the ancient Christmas dishes, the first and foremost in pomp and circumstance was the soused boar's head, which was borne in state and solemnity upon a gold or silver plate "with mince-reishe"—no meaner metal would suffice—into the banqueting hall by the sewer, the herald singing as he bore it, "*Caput apri deferro reddens laudes Domino*."

It is the tradition that a student at Queen's College, Oxford, while on a walk, reading Aristotle, being suddenly and furiously attacked by a wild boar, rammed his book into the animal's throat, crying *Græcum est*, and choked him to death. This dish commemorates his valor.

The next dish in importance was the peacock, which was skinned, cooked, and the skin returned, the animal thus being life-like as placed upon the table. It was carried to the dining hall to the sound of music, by a lady distinguished for birth and beauty, and served by those of like distinction, who followed it into the hall. Geese, capons, pheasants dressed with ambergrase, pies of carps' tongues, and *furmante*, a concoction which was neither "flesh, fowl, nor good red herring," were also among the dishes. Mince pies were popular, under the name of "mutton pies," as early as 1596, later authorities using nents' tongue instead of mutton, the other ingredients being about the same as at the present day. Plum pottage, a beef or mutton broth, thickened with brown bread, with raisins, currants, prunes, cloves, mace and ginger added, was another dish always served at the first course. Plum pudding, or plum porridge, was another.

At the present day, Christmas, divested of the ancient glories, its boisterous jollities, and exuberance of animal spirits, is nevertheless a season of a thousand genial influences. The gathering of scattered households around the Christmas hearth and board, strengthens the hallowed feelings of domestic love, renews sweet memories, inspires strength for the future, and in the sacred associations with which they are entwined, the active deeds of kindness they engender—these family clusterings almost give us a realization of the angelic message to the Shepherds of Bethlehem—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men."

## The Penitentiary.

To the Editor of the Phoenix.

SIR: The extraordinary message of Gov. Scott to the Legislature, touching my position as Superintendent of the Penitentiary, renders it necessary that I should make a proper reply. This I shall attempt to do, by asking you to publish my statement, prepared and submitted to the Commission, which has been investigating certain charges against me. The public will then see the character of the charges and how refuted. I shall also ask you to publish my report to Gov. Scott, embracing my transactions during the past year. The public is entitled to this information and my own self-respect demands that it should be given.

Gov. Scott may find it convenient to propose to discharge me from my present position. Indeed, I have no desire to retain the place; but I have no idea that Gov. Scott shall misrepresent my official conduct, which is above suspicion, and use it as a pretext to carry out his views and wishes, without an answer from me and without the impartial judgment of the public, whose servant I am. Respectfully,

THOMAS B. LEE, JR.,  
Acting Superintendent South Carolina Penitentiary.

FIRE.—The dwelling, out-buildings and 500 pounds of seed cotton, of our esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Charles Timms, was destroyed by fire on Monday night last. It was undoubtedly the work of an incendiary, as Mr. Timms had just bought the place and had not moved into the house. We wonder if Governor Scott will take any notice of these mid-night incendiaries?

## Winnsboro News.

An old negro woman in this County has been to see Lipfort, the cabinet-maker, and had her measure taken, and paid for a coffin to be buried in. She says that she doesn't expect to live long, and is afraid she will never have money to buy a coffin again.—*Clarksville Quind Nunc*.

STRANGE AND FATAL ACCIDENT.—A little girl residing in Charlotte street, while swinging yesterday on a rope attached to two posts, came in contact with one of them, and was so severely injured, that she died from the effects.—*Charleston News*.

## Local Items.

SUSPENSION.—No paper will be issued from this office to-morrow. Tri-weekly subscribers will be furnished with this morning's daily.

Religious services may be expected by the pastor Rev. Wm. Martin, this morning, at 11 o'clock, in the Washington Street Methodist Church.

The ladies and gentlemen of Columbia are invited to be present at the Baptist Church, this morning, the 25th, at 11 o'clock, to witness the distribution of gifts from the Christmas tree, to the scholars connected with the Sabbath school.

Passengers over the Greenville Railroad bring glowing accounts of the performances by Stone & Murray's circus troupe. They have exhibited to full houses in several up country towns. They perform here to-morrow—afternoon and night.

Constable Schwartz arrived last night, having in charge Fletcher Hodges, charged with being connected with the murder of Randolph, and Charles Dendy, supposed to be connected with the murder of Martin, several months ago. The prisoners were lodged in jail.

CASH.—Our terms are strictly cash. If an advertisement is to be inserted, hand over the money; if a paper is subscribed for, the money must accompany the order—otherwise no attention will be paid to them. This is a rule which will be adhered to.

YOUNG AMERICA FOR JANUARY.—There is always a great hurrah among the children when *Young America* arrives. Its stories, its puzzles, its pictures, possess an irresistible attraction, and induce lots of boys and girls to beg at bed-time for just "half an hour more." The January number is the third issue since the enlargement, and is, we believe, one of the most interesting and attractive that has been published. Publication Office, 838 Broadway, N. Y. At \$1.50 yearly.

CHRISTMAS TESTIMONIALS.—Messrs. E. & G. D. Hope's establishment is filled to repletion with useful articles in the way of first quality edibles and drinkables. Our thanks are tendered to them for a Christmas remembrance.

Messrs. Swaffield have received several packages of "Holiday Hats," something entirely new and elegant. Call and examine them. We did, and came off with our old hat done up in a bundle.

Mr. Pollard keeps—in addition to fancy articles—a stock of wines, etc., suitable to delicate palates. His Maraschino, Curacao and Absinthe are just the thing. "If you don't see what you want, ask for it." We did, and got it, too.

Mr. Symmers and Messrs. J. & T. R. Agnew and Fisher & Lowrance have also furnished their quotas, and will accept our thanks for their courtesies.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.—The following, lines by Miss Muloch, are commended to our people—one and all:

God rest you, merry gentle folks,  
Let nothing yours dismay;  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,  
Was born on Christmas day.

The dawn rose red on Bethlehem,  
The stars shone through the grey;  
When Jesus Christ, our Saviour,  
Was born on Christmas day.

God rest you, little children,  
Let nothing your affright;  
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour,  
Was born this happy night.

Along the hills of Galilee,  
The white flocks sleeping lay,  
When Christ, the child of Nazareth,  
Was born on Christmas day.

God rest you all, good Christians,  
Upon this blessed morn,  
The Lord of all true Christians  
Was of a woman born.

Now all your sorrow He doth heal,  
Your sins He takes away;  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,  
Was born on Christmas day.

FAST AND CHEAP PRINTING.—We have just added a fast card press—of the Degener & Weiler patent—to the machinery of the *Phoenix* office; and have also made additions to our stock of fancy type, cards, paper, etc. Persons in want of any styles of book and job printing, are invited to call and examine samples and prices. Cards printed at shortest notice, and at prices varying from \$3 to \$10 per thousand.

COTTON FIRE.—About 7 o'clock last night, a fire broke out in a car loaded with cotton, in the South Carolina Railroad yard, and in a short time communicated to two others, which were entirely destroyed. By the exertions of the railroad men, the balance of the train was saved. The firemen were engaged until a late hour in extinguishing the fire.

A good thing is generally worth all the struggle it costs; a bad one is to be rejected, let the struggle be what it may. On a good thing there is no discount, but on a bad one there is nothing but discount; those who have tried both will endorse what we say.

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.—Special attention is called to the following advertisements, published for the first time this morning:

Meeting Typographical Union.  
Rooms for Rent.  
C. A. Carrington—Notice.  
Dennis McGuinnis—Ten-Pins.

There is no mistake about it, PLANTATION BITTERS will ward off Fever and Ague and all kindred diseases, if used in time. No family need suffer from this distressing complaint, if they will keep PLANTATION BITTERS in the house, and use it according to directions. The most important ingredient of this medicine is the Calisaya or Peruvian Bark, which is known to be the finest and purest tonic in the vegetable kingdom. The extract of this Bark is the active principle of all the good Fever and Ague Medicines prescribed by intelligent doctors. Calisaya Bark is used extensively in the manufacture of PLANTATION BITTERS, as well as quinine, and we dare say they owe their popularity mostly to that fact. We can recommend them.

MAGNOLIA WATER—Superior to the best imported German Cologne, and sold at half the price. D25t1+3

For Rent.  
SEVERAL ROOMS over Palmer's Tin Store, on Main street. Dec 25

Notice.  
ALL persons to whom the late D. B. CARRINGTON was indebted, can have their claims paid, by presenting them properly attested, to Dec 25 1 C. A. CARRINGTON.

Notice.  
LOVERS of the game of TEN-PINS, will find a good Alley and superior accommodations, attached to the "Our House Restaurant"—open all hours. Dec 25 1 DENNIS MCGUINNIS, Superintendent.

Columbia Typographical Union.  
THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING of this Union will be held TO-MORROW, (Saturday) EVENING, at Palmetto Engine House, at 5 o'clock. By order of the President. JAMES T. WELLS, Dec 25 1 Secretary.

To Rent.  
A COTTAGE HOUSE, containing four rooms, with kitchen, out-houses, etc., within one square of Charlotte Depot. Apply at this Office. Dec 24

For Sale.  
A FINE lot of young Kentucky MULES. They may be seen at Mr. Charles Logan's lot, corner of Senate and Assembly streets. Dec 24 6\* W. S. TALBOTT.

HONEY! HONEY!!  
30 GALLONS of Clear EAST INDIA HONEY, just received at E. POLLARD'S. Dec 15 64\*

Christmas and New Year's Presents for Young and Old!

A VARIETY of JUVENILE BOOKS—Fine and cheap editions of the Standard POETICAL WORKS, British and American; Photograph ALBUMS, (50 styles,) from 75 cents to \$12.00. STEREOSCOPIES, and Pictures to match; CHROMOS, beautiful; Foreign ENGRAVINGS; Rosewood and Mahogany Writing DESKS; Portfolios; Work Boxes, all sizes; Gold Pencils; Gold Pens; Ink-stands; Pocket Knives; Diaries for 1869, (very neat); also, a new variety of Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Baptist HYMN BOOKS; Episcopal and Catholic Prayer Books; Fine Pocket and Family BIBLES, &c., from England, all styles, just received, at BRYAN & McCARTER'S Dec 22 10 Book Store.

For Sale or Rent.  
A COMMODIOUS HOUSE, on Laurel street. Apply to F. W. McMASTER, No. 5 Law Range, Columbia, S. C. Dec 20 6\*

Come! Come!! Come!!!  
GET your Christmas Groceries: RAISINS, Currants, Nuts, Citron, Spices, Jellies, Oranges, Lemons, Prunes. Finest Hams in North America, Smoked Salmon and Tongues, Pickled Trout and Pig's Feet. LICUORS, &c.

SCOTCH WHISKEY, (real Peat Reek,) Jamaica Rum, Pure French Brandy, Choice Whiskey, Madeira, Port, Sherry, Malaga, Tennesse, Newark Cider, &c., &c. GEO. SYMMERS. For sale by Dec 20

Wanted.  
EMPTY CORN BAGS, 500 Empty Flour and Potatoes Barrels. FISHER & LOWRANCE.

Smoking and Chewing Tobacco.  
8 BOXES ROSE BUD, very fine, 4 boxes Commonwealth, very fine, 4 boxes Dew Drop, very fine, 2 cases pure Virginia Leaf Smoking Tobacco, half and whole boxes. JOHN C. SEEGERS, Dec 10 Main street, rear Post Office.